

# BACKGROUND

## John Lennon's 1965 Rolls-Royce Phantom V Touring Limousine (RBCM 992.66.2)

### THE CAR

- The John Lennon Phantom V Touring Limousine Rolls-Royce was purchased by John Lennon in December, 1964 and delivered in June, 1965. When Lennon ordered the car, he did not yet have his **driver's licence**.
- It was originally painted "valentine black" and was the largest model made by Rolls-Royce with all options and many custom orders. The walnut trim interior included state-of-the-art features such as an 8-track tape deck, a record player, a radio-telephone and the first experiment with tinted window glass.
- The curb weight of a standard 1964 Phantom V Rolls-Royce is 3,000 kilograms. In comparison, a smart fortwo coupé ("**Smart car**") weighs only 880 kilograms.

### LENNON'S OWNERSHIP

- It was this Rolls-Royce that carried The Beatles to Buckingham Palace to receive their Member of the British Empire medals (MBE) from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1965.
- The car was damaged when Lennon took it to Spain in 1966 for the film *How I Won the War*, in which he had a role. During the factory repairs, Lennon requested further modifications, such as a rear seat that converts into a bed, and a television.

### CUSTOMIZED PAINTWORK

- In 1967, Lennon sent the rolls to J.P. Fallon of Chertsey, Surrey where local commercial artist Steve Weaver designed custom paintwork in a Romany Gypsy style, with elements of the psychedelic era. The car was delivered to Lennon just before the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album was released.

### CONSERVATION



- Mr. Weaver used ordinary but very vulnerable house (latex) paint. The Royal BC Museum monitors the paint condition closely and has done conservation work on the paint.
- The car has been in mechanical operating condition for fifty years. The engine powers the brakes, a necessary feature given its weight.
- The car has been in the Royal BC Museum collection for more than 20 years and has been on display at various museum special events. It has also been exhibited across North America, most recently at exhibits in Montreal and in Vancouver at the 2015 PNE, and was sent by air to Britain in 2017.
- In order to maintain the moving parts, the Royal BC Museum must run the vehicle at least once a year. Each time the vehicle is moved, doors and hoods opened or closed, and the engine vibrates, the paint is put at risk. Care for the John Lennon Rolls-Royce has been a delicate balancing act between keeping the moving parts in order and preserving the delicate paint.

#### OWNERSHIP POST- LENNON

- In 1970, Lennon and Yoko Ono took the car to the US. Due to tax issues it was donated to the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design (now Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum) in 1974 and shown in an exhibit on design. **It was then sold at auction at a Sotheby's Auction in 1985. It was purchased by BC billionaire entrepreneur James "Jimmy" Pattison, OC, OBC, for his chain of Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Museums for US \$2,299,000 and displayed in his largest venue in Florida as "the world's most expensive car."**
- The Premier of BC appointed Mr. Pattison to oversee the Expo '86 **World's** fair. As the **fair's theme was** "Transportation and Communication: World in Motion - **World in Touch**", **many** vehicles were displayed – including this Rolls, an extremely popular and photogenic attraction.
- **After Expo '86, instead** of exporting the vehicle, Mr. Pattison donated it in 1987 to the Province of British Columbia, where it was displayed in the Transportation Museum of BC, near Vancouver for museum exhibit. Ownership changed hands for \$1.
- In 1993, the car was transferred to the BC Provincial Museum (now the Royal BC Museum) in Victoria, where it has remained ever since.

- The Rolls-Royce was selected as one of the Royal BC Museum's [100 Objects of Interest](#) in 2014.
- Most recently, the Rolls-Royce has been on display:
  - in 2012/13, in Montreal;
  - in 2014, **at the PNE in Vancouver for “Magical Mystery Tour: A Beatles Memorabilia Exhibition”**;
  - in February, 2016, inside the Royal BC Museum's **Glass Lobby**;
  - in June, 2017, outside the Royal BC Museum for one day only;
  - in July-Aug, 2017, as part of **‘The Great Eight Phantoms’**, a Rolls-Royce Exhibition, at Bonhams on New Bond Street, an area visited regularly by Lennon in the late 1960s in this very car.

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#### About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Located in Victoria on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations), we are a hub of community connections in BC—onsite, offsite and online—taking pride in our collective histories.

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